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Governor Scott Walker
Secretary Eloise Anderson

Division of Early Care and Education

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Dear Early Childhood Stakeholder:

I am pleased to provide findings from the Wisconsin Early Child Care Study (WECCS) on behalf of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge (RTTT-ELC) Leadership Team which is comprised of the Department of Public Instruction Assistant State Superintendent Sheila Briggs, Department of Health Services Administrator of the Division of Public Health Karen McKeown, and me. The WECCS examined the validity of YoungStar, Wisconsin's Quality Rating and Improvement System. The study was conducted by Professor Katherine Magnuson from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, School of Social Work and the Institute for Research on Poverty.

The WECCS was designed to explore two issues. First, whether the YoungStar rating scale differentiates between programs according to their levels of independently observed child care quality. And, secondly, to determine whether three- to five-year-old children in highly rated programs had higher levels of school readiness compared with similar children in programs rated at lower star levels. Analyses of the data showed YoungStar ratings differentiate among programs of varying observed quality. Specifically, programs rated 2 Star had lower observed quality than programs rated 3-5 Star. The differences were statistically significant and meaningful. Additionally, the results revealed that the total points in all four rating domains predicted observed quality.

With respect to the second issue, the data revealed that children in the study were performing in accordance with national norms and increased their child assessment scores over the course of the school year and would enter school ready to learn. However, analysis of the data did not support the conclusion that children in higher rated YoungStar programs predicted higher levels of school readiness compared with children in 2 Star programs.

The WECCS obtained data from 157 group and family child care programs in the Northeastern and Milwaukee YoungStar regions in the 2013-14 academic year. The study used the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) tools to observe quality in programs serving three-to-five year olds. In addition to the ERS tools, parents, teachers and administrators were surveyed to collect further information. School readiness was measured directly by trained staff using developmentally appropriate assessments.

We look forward to further discussion and analysis of this data to better inform the future work of the Division of Early Care and Education and the YoungStar program.

Sincerely,


Judy Norman-Nunnery, Ph.D.
Division Administrator

